

Cardiff scrape in as Blues miss chances

WYCOMBE Wanderers came out at Ninian Park, Cardiff, on Saturday as rank underdogs. But at the end of this F.A. Cup second round tie they had earned the respect and admiration of 10,000 Welshmen for yet another brave cup performance.

No one really gave the Blues much of a chance against Cardiff, fifth in the Third Division and unbeaten in eight matches. But by sheer hard graft, they made City fight every inch of the way for their victory which was earned by centre-forward Tony Evans with a goal in the 43rd minute.

For much of this match it was level pegging all the way and although Cardiff had the greater number of chances, some people felt the Blues deserved a second chance with a replay at Loakes Park. They went mightily close to it, too. Dylan Evans hit the left upright with Cardiff wondering where they were after 10 minutes and had the run of the ball gone their way. Wanderers might have pulled it off.

City, however, had just too much experience for them and the difference between the two sides was upfront. Cardiff had three dangerous forwards in Alston, Anderson and Evans while Wanderers couldn't sustain enough pressure in their front line.

Wycombe supporters must have been both surprised and disappointed with Cardiff. For a side with such an impressive record and famous individuals, they should have given Wycombe a much harder game, but in the end they were hanging on grimly for their visit to Leyton Orient in the third round. Had they converted more of their chances the scoreline would have been larger but City hadn't bargained for

John Maskell, who pulled off some excellent saves.

Maskell was the outstanding individual in Wycombe's performance but no one let the side down and no one gave anything less than an all-out effort. Both full-backs, John Delaney and the midfield trio all slogged away to deny Cardiff and they succeeded in throwing the home side out of their stride. With Terry Reardon marking Livermore and Holifield covering Gil Reece, Cardiff's

all the difference, for Cardiff were really taken aback by Wycombe's attacking skills. For most of the half, in fact, it was difficult to distinguish who were the professionals for the first half was delicately balanced until the City goal.

Maskell had to tip over one cross from Dwyer after Holifield lost possession in his own penalty area, but with Wanderers chasing and fighting for every ball, Cardiff were never given

run back to hook the ball away for a corner.

Cardiff stretched their game wider after that success and thereby found more space in which to work. Wanderers, however, kept plugging away at them and Geoff Anthony began to cause problems with some good runs and crosses.

Dave Alexander replaced Horseman after 68 minutes, a good move by manager Brian Lee as 'Bodger' had failed to make any real impression up front.

Cardiff were beginning to look more and more dangerous as the half progressed and they missed two good chances in two minutes. The first came when Alston broke free on the left and drove hard from 10 yards. Maskell, alert as ever, parried the shot which was scrambled away. Then, 60 seconds later, Keith Mead tried to pass back to his goalkeeper but pushed the ball into the path of Anderson who had a clear route to goal. Maskell came off his line and forced Anderson to shoot too early, the keeper gathering the shot at the second attempt.

Wanderers broke this spell of pressure in the 82nd minute when Alexander sent a perfect ball through to Anthony but Irwin saved a certain goal by coming out and clearing the shot at the expense of a corner.

It was to prove Wycombe's last chance. They kept pressing until the final whistle, giving Cardiff some nerve-racking moments in defence. But the Blues lacked enough sting up front to make the vital breakthrough and the Welshmen held out for their victory.

Wanderers can feel proud with their achievement on Saturday, for many felt they would go down heavily at Ninian Park. But by showing real character and giving everything they had, Wycombe justly earned the generous applause of the crowd, which included many supporters from High Wycombe, as they trooped off to the pitch.

This performance completed three years of almost unprecedented success for the club in the F.A. Cup. In 1973 they reached the second round, beating Newport on the way. Last year they reached the third round for the first time and held Middlesbrough. This time they got through to the second round again, losing only 1-0 at Cardiff. It's been a remarkable record and a tribute to the club, manager and the players.

CARDIFF: W. Irwin; P. Dwyer, A. Lar-mour, M. England, F. Pethard; J. Buchanan, A. Evans, W. Anderson. Sub. D. Giles (not used).

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell; P. Birdseye, K. Mead, J. Delaney, D. Bullock, H. Kennedy, T. Reardon, M. Holifield, A. Horseman (sub. D. Alexander 68 mins.). D. Evans, G. Anthony.

Referee: J. Shaper (Paisginton).
Half-time: 1-0. **Goalscorer, Cardiff:** Evans (43).

Official attendance: 11,607.

Cardiff City 1, Wycombe W. 0

F.A. Cup report by Stuart Earp



engine room was never allowed to get into top gear and the middle three also found time to probe for openings and go forward.

Wanderers, who fielded the side that beat Bedford in the last round, must have been wondering what was happening in the first 10 minutes, for they waited for Cardiff's opening assault to hit them. . . . and waited and waited. Needless to say, the expected early burst never materialised and indeed, Cardiff looked distinctly more nervous than their non-league opponents.

Wycombe's confidence grew and after 10 minutes they all but took the lead on two occasions — but both times their luck was out. The first came when John Delaney dummied Kennedy's long throw at the near post. Cardiff panicked as Geoff Anthony thumped in a shot which was blocked. The ball squirted loose and goalkeeper Bill Irwin saved the day by diving at Tony Horseman's feet. Only seconds later, City were split wide open by one of the Blues' best moves of the game.

The ball was played upfield and, with Cardiff retreating, Horseman slipped a pass through for Evans on the left. Dylan ran into the box past a defender and then lined up a shot which crashed against the upright. Irwin was beaten by the drive and watched relieved as the ball was thumped away.

A goal then might have made

time to settle. And their main dangerman, Willie Anderson, was hardly given a sniff by the Blues full-backs who kept a tight rein on the former Manchester United winger.

A thrilling burst of speed by Holifield carved out another Wycombe chance after 24 minutes but Horseman had to hurry his shot and scooped the ball over the bar.

As the minutes ticked by, things looked better and better for Wycombe. They had not only held Cardiff for half-an-hour but had looked equally as good. City had only a couple of weaving runs from Alston to point to possible chances while Wanderers had produced three. Their fourth came after 40 minutes when Evans ran across the penalty area and laid the ball off for Reardon to try first time. Terry caught the ball well but Irwin tipped his shot around the post.

Three minutes later Cardiff struck the killer blow against the run of play. It was one of the few occasions Anderson got clear on the flank — and this time it proved decisive. He got to the by-line and flighted over a perfect cross. The heads went up but Tony Evans got there first and rammed in a header from six yards. Maskell did well to parry the effort but stood no chance as Evans stuck out a leg and prodded his second chance home.

And so Wanderers, having had the better of the first half, found themselves trailing rather cruelly 1-0. But they must have gained considerable satisfaction from their performance. They had weathered almost everything Cardiff could offer and also created several scoring opportunities themselves. If they could keep City under pressure for any length of time, the signs of panic were there.

In the end this was where Wycombe failed. They lacked sufficient power upfront to break through the defence, where Mike England dominated the aerial battles.

With that confidence behind them after the first half, the Blues came out more determined than ever at the start of the new period. They stormed into attack and promptly forced four corners in three minutes. All four of Horseman's flag kicks went deep into the six yard box and eventually Irwin took the ball safely. I would have preferred to see Delaney come to the near post for some of these corners as the big centre-half caused all sorts of trouble with this ploy from long throws. Instead, all four were pumped just under the crossbar.

Australian World Cup player Adrian Alston was looking City's most dangerous forward. Big and strong, he was difficult to stop when in full flight and showed excellent control for a tall man. Fortunately for Wycombe, his finishing was poor on several occasions, although he did force Maskell to push one effort away after 60 minutes.

Soon afterwards, Alston combined brilliantly with the hard working Evans. He pushed the ball through a big gap in the Blues' back four for the centre-forward to run on. Maskell came out well and managed to take the weight off Evans' shot and Mead

THIRD BEST 'GATE'

WYCOMBE Wanderers' tie at Cardiff on Saturday attracted the third largest crowd of the day in the F.A. Cup second round. The gate at Ninian Park totalled 11,607 and a good proportion of them made the three hour journey from High Wycombe. The Blues' support, in fact, was excellent throughout the game. The best crowd of the day was at the London local derby between Millwall and Crystal Palace. A total of 14,902 packed into the Den to watch the 1-1 draw while Sheffield Wednesday attracted 12,436 for their tie against non-league Wigan.

Coventry Sporting used the Coventry City ground at Highfield Road for their game against Peterborough and were watched by a crowd of 8,556, by far the biggest gate in Sporting's history. Meanwhile Hendon must have been disappointed with only 3,349 at Claremont Road. After their win against Reading in the previous round, they deserved a better attendance for the Swindon tie.